

REMARKS

Claims 1-18, 20-21, and 27-37 are pending. Applicant has amended claims 1 and 27, and canceled claims 19, 22-26, and 38-76.

Applicant wishes to thank the Examiner for his consideration during the telephone interview of August 25, 2004. During the interview, the Examiner and applicant's representative discussed the Roberts reference and claim 1. Applicant's representative explained that the invention of claim 1 is directed to use of the commands (e.g., reply and delete) of an electronic mail program (e.g., OUTLOOK) to manipulate collaborative electronic mail messages. Prior electronic mail programs could apply such commands only to non-collaborative electronic mail messages. An electronic mail program performing the invention of claim 1 would allow a user to select a collaborative electronic mail message and to select a "reply" command to reply to the collaborative electronic mail message. The client-side portion of the electronic mail program would then send an indication of the reply to the server-side portion of the electronic mail program. The server-side portion would take actions to effect the reply (e.g., send update messages to the recipients). Thus, the invention of claim 1 allows use of the same commands for both non-collaborative and collaborative electronic mail messages.

Applicant has amended the claims make it more explicit that the commands of an electronic mail program for manipulating other electronic mail messages are also available for manipulating collaborative electronic mail messages. For example, claim 1 recites "accepting commands ... to manipulate the collaborative electronic mail message" and "performing an accepted command, wherein the performing includes sending to the electronic mail server an indication of the command so that the electronic mail server can modify the collaborative electronic mail message in accordance with the command and notify recipients of the modification."

The Examiner has rejected the pending claims under 35 U.S.C. § 102 as being anticipated by Roberts. Applicant respectfully disagrees.

Roberts describes use of a "Zaplet." A Zaplet is a combination of an HTML page and an email message that includes a hyperlink to the HTML page. The email message is sent to the recipients identified by the creator of the Zaplet. When a recipient opens the email message, the HTML page is retrieved and displayed to the recipient. The recipient can then interact with the HTML page just like any other web page. Applicant is citing in the accompanying Information Disclosure Statement U.S. Patent No. 6,463,461, which describes additional details about Zaplets. The Examiner mentioned this patent in the Office Action, but did not include it in the Notice of References Cited.

Roberts describes the operation of a Zaplet in the context of a polling application as follows:

To create a polling Zaplet, you begin by filling in a form that asks for the subject and content of the poll, including the choices recipients will have, the form also asks for email address for the recipient list.

After you submit the Zaplet, two key things happen. First, an HTML page containing the information in the form is created and stored on one of FireDrop's servers. Second, recipients receive Zaplet notifications in their email in-boxes. Depending on the type of email client a recipient uses, which the Zaplet is able to detect on the fly, either the HTML page containing the poll or a hyperlink to the page is displayed in the message. The recipients can place their votes, make comments, and view a pie chart or bar graph with up-to-the-moment tabulations.

Thus, when the recipient opens the Zaplet notification email message, the HTML page is retrieved from the server either automatically or when the recipient selects the hyperlink. Because the HTML page is stored at the server and not in the email message, "changes to the Zaplet are posted in real time in one clean, organizing page [at the server]."

Roberts neither teaches nor suggests that commands of an electronic mail program can be used to manipulate a collaborative electronic mail message. Although commands of an electronic mail program could be used to manipulate Roberts's "Zaplet notifications," which are email messages, a "Zaplet notification" is not "a collaborative electronic mail message."

An example will help illustrate the distinction. When a recipient receives a Zaplet notification email message, the recipient could reply to the Zaplet notification using the reply command of an email program. That reply would, however, be sent to the email address associated with the program that emailed the Zaplet notification. Roberts makes no suggestion as to what would be done with such a reply. Thus, a recipient would have no reason to reply to a Zaplet notification—it is only a notification and not a collaborative electronic mail message. In contrast, with the invention of claim 1, when a participant of a collaborative electronic mail message uses the reply command of an electronic mail program, each participant receives a notification that the collaborative electronic mail message has been updated.

In addition, Roberts neither teaches nor suggests "a collaborative electronic mail message that includes a portion for feedback from one or more recipients." Roberts's email message is not a "collaborative electronic mail message." It is simply a notification email message that directs the recipient to an HTML page stored at a server. Moreover, Roberts's email message (i.e., Zaplet notification) does not include "a portion for feedback." It contains a hyperlink to the HTML page and presumably some information about the reason for the notification, but no "portion for feedback."

Based on the above amendments and remarks, applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of this application and its early allowance. If the Examiner has any questions or believes a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is encouraged to call the undersigned at (206) 359-8548.

Respectfully submitted,

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